

CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-12. (canceled)

13. (currently amended) An animal treat ball apparatus comprising:

an animal treat ball having a generally spheroidal outside surface;

an interior compartment within the generally spheroidal outside surface for containing animal treats;

an aperture within said generally spheroidal outside surface providing access to said interior compartment, said aperture truncating a portion of said generally spheroidal outside ~~spherical outer~~ surface; and

a removable cap removably retained within the aperture and at least partially blocking the aperture, said removable cap having a substantially dome-shaped ~~outer~~ outward-facing surface generally conforming to said truncated portion of said generally spheroidal outside ~~outer~~ surface such that rolling of said animal treat ball apparatus across the aperture is enhanced while said removable cap is retained within said aperture and diminished after removal thereof.

14. (canceled)

15. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 13, further including a sinuous raised feature on the generally spheroidal outside surface.

16. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein:

the aperture is an outer extent of a space within the animal treat ball apparatus in which the removable cap is removably retained; and

the space is offset from a center location of the animal treat ball apparatus.

17. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the wall of the interior compartment

includes a funnel section adjacent the opening for funneling items to the ~~second~~ opening, wherein the funnel section has a greater thickness further from the opening and a lesser thickness closer to the opening.[[;]]

18. (canceled)

19. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the removable cap is an edible animal treat.

20. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the wall includes more than one flexible flap limiting a size of the opening.

21.-26. (canceled)

27. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the aperture is a first aperture, and wherein a second aperture is formed in the generally spheroidal outside surface that allows animal treats to move between the interior compartment and an exterior of the animal treat ball apparatus.

28.-29. (canceled)

30. (currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 13, wherein:

the animal treat ball apparatus has a lip at a perimeter of the aperture; ~~and~~
the substantially dome-shaped outward-facing surface of the removable cap has a central peak portion and a peripheral base portion; and

when the removable cap is retained within the space, the lip overlays at least some of the peripheral base portion ~~some but not the peak portion less than all of the~~ substantially dome-shaped ~~outer~~ outward-facing surface of the removable cap.

31. (currently amended) An animal treat ball apparatus, comprising:

an animal treat ball having a generally spheroidal outside surface;

an aperture within said generally spheroidal outside surface that truncates a portion of said generally spheroidal outside ~~spherical outer~~ surface and that permits access to a space within the animal treat ball apparatus;

an interior compartment within the generally spheroidal outside surface for containing animal treats;

a wall separating the interior compartment and the space, the wall having an opening formed therein that allows animal treats to move between the interior compartment and the space; and

a removable cap removably retained within the space that blocks access to the space via and at least partially blocking the aperture, said removable cap having a substantially dome-shaped outward-facing ~~outer~~ surface generally conforming to said truncated portion of said generally spheroidal outside ~~outer~~ surface such that rolling of said animal treat ball apparatus across the aperture is enhanced while said removable cap is retained within said aperture and diminished after removal thereof.

32. (canceled)

33. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the removable cap comprises an edible animal treat.

34. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein:

the animal treat ball apparatus has a lip at a perimeter of the aperture;

the substantially dome-shaped outward-facing surface of the removable cap has a central peak portion and a peripheral base portion; and

when the removable cap is retained within the space, the lip overlays at least some of the peripheral base portion ~~some but not the peak portion less than all of the~~ substantially dome-shaped ~~outer~~ outward-facing surface of the removable cap.

35. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 31, further including a sinuous raised feature on the generally spheroidal outside surface of the animal treat ball apparatus.

36. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the space is offset from a center location of the animal treat ball apparatus.

37. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the wall includes a funnel section adjacent the opening for funneling items to the opening, wherein the funnel section has a greater thickness further from the opening and a lesser thickness closer to the opening.

38. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the wall includes more than one flexible flap limiting a size of the opening.

39. (canceled)

40. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 13, and further comprising:

a wall separating the aperture and the interior compartment, the wall having an opening formed therein that allows animal treats to move between the interior compartment and the aperture.

41. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 16, wherein a dimension of the space spaced apart from the aperture and in a second plane parallel to a first plane containing the aperture is greater than a maximum dimension of the aperture.

42. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein a dimension of the space spaced apart from the aperture and in a second plane parallel to a first plane containing the aperture is greater than a maximum dimension of the aperture.

43. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the aperture is a first aperture, and wherein a second aperture is formed in the generally spheroidal outside surface that allows animal treats to move between the interior compartment and an exterior of the animal treat ball apparatus.

44. (new) The animal treat ball apparatus of Claim 13, wherein said animal treat ball comprises a unitary resilient member.

45. (new) The apparatus of Claim 31, wherein said animal treat ball comprises a unitary resilient member.

46. (new) The animal treat ball apparatus of Claim 13, wherein the removable cap blocks the aperture.

47. (new) The apparatus of Claim 31, wherein the removable cap blocks the aperture.

48. (new) The animal treat ball apparatus of Claim 41, wherein:

the dimension is a maximum dimension of the space; and

the removable cap is an edible animal treat having a size of approximately the maximum dimension of the space.

49. (new) The apparatus of Claim 42, wherein:

the dimension is a maximum dimension of the space; and

the removable cap is an edible animal treat having a size of approximately the maximum dimension of the space.

50. (new) An animal treat ball apparatus comprising:

a unitary resilient member having a generally spheroidal outside surface;

an interior compartment within the generally spheroidal outside surface for containing animal treats;

an aperture within said generally spheroidal outside surface providing access to said interior compartment, said aperture truncating a portion of said generally spheroidal outside surface; and

a removable cap removably retained within the aperture that blocks the aperture, said removable cap having a substantially dome-shaped outward-facing surface generally conforming to said truncated portion of said generally spheroidal outside surface such that rolling of said animal treat ball apparatus across the aperture is enhanced while said removable cap is retained within said aperture and diminished after removal thereof.

51. (new) An animal treat apparatus comprising:

- a unitary resilient member having an outside surface;

- an interior compartment within the unitary resilient member for containing animal treats;

- an aperture within said outside surface providing access to said interior compartment, wherein the aperture lies within a plane and is surrounded by a perimeter lip of the unitary resilient member; and

- an edible animal treat removably retained within the aperture that blocks access to the interior compartment via the aperture, wherein:

 - the edible animal treat has a substantially dome-shaped outward-facing surface; and

 - when the edible animal treat is removably retained within the aperture, a central portion of the edible animal treat extends outwardly from the unitary resilient member beyond the plane and a peripheral portion of the edible animal treat is resiliently held within the aperture such that, in a direction orthogonal to the plane, the perimeter lip overlays the peripheral portion.

52. (new) The animal treat apparatus of claim 51, wherein the unitary resilient member includes a wall separating the aperture and the interior compartment, the wall having an opening formed therein that allows animal treats to move between the interior compartment and the aperture.

53. (new) The animal treat apparatus of claim 52, wherein the wall includes more than one resilient flap limiting a size of the opening.